

THE
**FUTURE
OF
AMERICA'S
NATIONAL
PARKS**

First Annual
Centennial Strategy for

Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historical Park

August 2007

CENTENNIAL INITIATIVE



Site: CHOH

Year: 2007

Vision Statement

The story of the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal is one of grand visions and unrealized potential. This was true of George Washington's dream of an inland waterway and it is also true of U.S. Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas's vision of the canal as a national park: a grand vision that can be realized in the 21st Century.

The C&O Canal never made it to its intended destination on the Ohio River. The difficulties of constructing and maintaining the canal in the early 19th Century and the advances in the technology of the railroad, proved to be extraordinary. Today at the Chesapeake & Ohio National Historical Park, towpath continuity is viewed as the core operational vision of the National Park Service. Then, as now, flooding is the challenge. Fulfilling our vision will require perseverance, creativity and the use of sustainable repairs.

With more than 3 million visitors each year, our vision can include various projects and programs to further connect even more people with their canal heritage including restoring the Big Slackwater area that currently precludes towpath continuity, extending the Western Maryland Rail Trail with local and state partners, restoring and opening historic lockhouses for visitor enjoyment, operating replica skiffs and making locks operational to provide a shuttle system and interpretive opportunity along the lower 23 miles of the canal, and creating experiential learning opportunities with Williamsport's seven major historic structures.

These ideas and others can make this park more broadly relevant to communities along the canal and to a diversity of potential visitors in the 21st Century. This vision is dependent on our ability to build a strong philanthropic relationship with the C&O Canal Trust and other friends groups such as the C&O Canal Association, Friends of the Historic Great Falls Tavern and Potomac Conservancy. By building community relationships, strengthening partnerships and working with the 6 million people who live in the region our vision for the C&O Canal National Historical Park will be realized.

Park/ Superintendent/ Program Manager

Kevin D. Brandt

Site: CHOH

STEWARDSHIP

☒ Improve the condition of park resources and assets.

☒ Rehabilitate high-priority historic buildings to good condition, and help communities to preserve their history through programs like Preserve America.

The C&O Canal NHP is updating its inventory of historic properties and will work with its newly formed philanthropic fundraising friends group, the C&O Canal Trust, to develop and implement the idea of rehabilitating the historic lockhouses and other historic structures into overnight rest stops along the canal for visitor use and enjoyment. This will be another way that both visitors and local residents can reconnect with their canal heritage.

☒ The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

☒ Restore native habitats by controlling invasive species and reintroducing key plant and animal species.

The C&O Canal NHP will continue to work with partner organizations and cooperating agencies to restore the threatened plant Harperella through enhancement of its native habitats, by controlling invasive species and the planting of cultivated seedlings. In addition, park staff will continue cooperative efforts to control invasive species and restore native habitats in the Potomac Gorge

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Site: CHOH

ENVIRONMENT

☒ Inspire an environmental conscience in Americans.

☒ Demonstrate environmental excellence through increased use of alternative energy and fuels at every park.

The C&O Canal NHP will encourage park partners to conserve energy and use alternative fuels, when conducting programs within the park as well as their other operations. Contractors and concessionaires will be encouraged to use green products as well as alternative fuels such as ethanol and biodiesel. The park will continue its move towards bio-fuels for routine operations and special projects as well as utilizing solar lighting where possible.

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☒ Serve as a model for energy efficiency, under Executive Order 13423, by ensuring Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards.

Park staff will start each project with the development of 'greening' goals and design criteria prior to the start of actual design. Greening charettes will be conducted as part of the park's planning and design process as well as operational greening charettes to provide an opportunity for diverse interests to work together as a team to insure that park operations and project designs are high performance and sustainable. Environmental Life-Cycle Assessment processes will be used to analyze the potential environmental impacts that are associated with entire life cycle of the design objective.

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Site: CHOH

RECREATION

☒ Encourage collaboration among and assist park and recreation systems at every level-federal, regional, state, local-to help build an outdoor recreation network accessible to all Americans.

☒ Rehabilitate over 2,000 miles of trails within or connected to national parks, including trails accessible to those with disabilities.

Park staff will continue to rehabilitate high priority areas of the canal's towpath where erosion reduces visitor safety and enjoyment. It is a long-standing goal to restore continuity to the towpath which now is only broken at an area called Big Slackwater. In partnership with local communities, the park's friends groups and others it is hoped that by 2016, the towpath is repaired and the link to the Great Allegheny Passage trail in Cumberland, Maryland to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania is complete.

Park staff will continue, with its partners, to evaluate the extension of the Western Maryland Rail Trail to Paw Paw, West Virginia, and further enhance and expand the recreational opportunities for millions of local residents and visitors to this incredibly beautiful river valley.

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Site: CHOH

RECREATION

☒ Establish "volun-tourism" excursions to national parks for volunteers to help achieve natural and cultural resource protection goals.

☒ Increase annual volunteer hours by 100 percent, from 5.2 million hours to 10.4 million hours.

Our existing corps of 2500 volunteers will be expanded and used to extend the park's positive attributes, opportunities and initiatives

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Site: CHOH

EDUCATION

☒ Cooperate with educators to provide curriculum materials, high-quality programs, and park-based and online learning.

☒ Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Park staff will explore additional partnerships with local school districts to continue the park's successful Bridging the Watershed education program. The park will extend its use of technology and media, such as with podcasts, etc., to reach students beyond the geographic region of the park. The park will explore working with the C&O Canal Trust to create and deliver seminars and other educational programs.

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Site: CHOH

EDUCATION

☒ Introduce young people and their families to national parks by using exciting media and technology.

☒ Increase the number of web hits through the introduction of advanced, interactive features that attract young people to national parks.

The park staff will explore working with the C&O Canal Trust and other partners to provide links to enable visitors to access podcasts and other downloadable interpretive media. The park will work with area parks to create a web site to tell the stories of the Civil War in Western Maryland and West Virginia.

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Site: CHOH

EDUCATION

☒ Impart to every American a sense of their citizen ownership of their national parks.

☒ Increase visitors' satisfaction, understanding, and appreciation of the parks they visit.

The park will prioritize facilities and services so that the most important remain in good condition or available to the public. This includes a wide range of media and interpretative and education programs presented by both park staff and partners. Exhibits, folders and other interpretive media will be revised or created to provide interpretive services to visitors with impairments as well as diverse audiences. The park will also expand their formal interpretive programs on the Civil War as it affected the Canal. These programs and media will be designed to provide opportunities for visitors of all capabilities to understand and appreciate the meanings and significance of the park.

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Site: CHOH

PROFESSIONALISM

☒ Promote a safety and health culture for all employees and visitors.

☒ Reduce the number of employee lost-time incidents and serious visitor injuries by 20 percent.

The park staff will reintroduce the Behavior Based Safety Program with emphasis on eliminating at-risk behaviors and promoting safe behaviors through an observation process. Additionally, the park will hire a Safety Officer to be shared with Catoctin Mountain Park. Among many priorities will be the investigation and analysis of visitor and employee accidents and near misses so that corrective actions can be implemented.

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Site: CHOH

PROFESSIONALISM

☒ Model what it means to work in partnership.

☒ Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The park will strive to continue its leadership as a premier partnership park. We will foster the growth of the C&O Canal Trust and develop a formal agreement with them to, among other things, assist in the evaluation of the volunteer program. Park staff will continue to strive to connect communities to their canal heritage. We will continue to support and participate in special events in and along the canal and towpath. We will ensure that all events are permitted in accordance with all regulatory requirements. This will ensure that the continuity and sustainability of the canal and towpath are maintained and at all events are adequately managed.

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